DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 458 420 CE 082 594

AUTHOR	Niles, Spencer G.; Herr, Edwin L.; Hartung, Paul J.
TITLE	Achieving Life Balance: Myths, Realities, and Developmental Perspectives. Information Series.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	No-387
PUB DATE	2001-00-00
NOTE	46p.
CONTRACT	ED-99-CO-0013
AVAILABLE FROM	Center on Education and Training for Employment, Center Publications, 1900 Kenny Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1090 (Order No. IN 387: $8). For full text: http://www.ericacve.org/majorpubs2.asp?ID=27.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- ERIC Publications (071) -- Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adjustment (to Environment); Adult Development; Career Counseling; *Career Development; Change; Coping; Counseling Techniques; Counseling Theories; Cultural Differences; Employment Patterns; Family Influence; *Family Work Relationship; *Individual Development; *Job Satisfaction; *Life Satisfaction; Life Style; Literature Reviews; Models; Personality Theories; Personality Traits; Portfolios (Background Materials); Psychological Studies; *Quality of Life; Social Influences; Social Science Research; Theory Practice Relationship; Trend Analysis; Wellness; Work Attitudes; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS	Super (Donald E)

ABSTRACT

The evolving role of work in society and the factors driving emerging trends in work were examined to assist career development practitioners in helping individuals deal with life-role balance. Donald Super's life-space theory was presented as a framework for adult career development and used as a backdrop for discussing how adults can crystallize their life-role identities, develop life-role readiness and adaptability, and move from role conflict toward life-role integration. Life-role salience and the contextual influences on life-role behavior were shown to be particularly useful for addressing life-role readiness. The behavior of planning was deemed especially important because it reflects awareness, which is the first step in coping with the developmental tasks associated with any life role. Life-role planning portfolios were recommended as an effective tool that career educators and career counselors can use to help people develop the behaviors of planning, exploring, information gathering, decision, making, and reality testing. Career educators and counselors were urged to remember that people differ in terms of which roles are most viable and salient for them and that personal, structural, and cultural factors such as gender expectations, social class, discrimination, personal choice, and family expectations influence individuals' levels of commitment to and participation in life roles. (Contains 57 references.) (MN)

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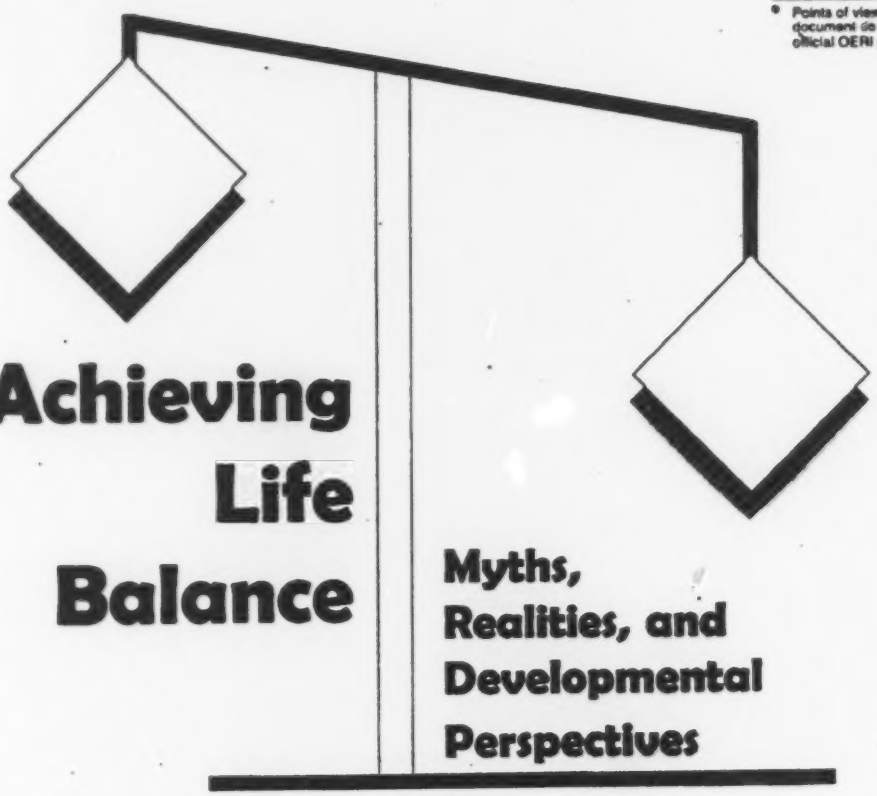

Achieving Life Balance

Myths, Realities, and Developmental Perspectives

by Spencer G. Niles
Edwin L. Herr
Paul J. Hartung

ERIC
Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education

Information Series No. 387

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2001

Funding Information

Project Title:	ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Contract Number:	ED-99-CO-0013
Act under Which Administered:	41 USC 252 (15) and P.L. 92-318
Source of Contract:	Office of Educational Research and Improvement U.S. Department of Education Washington, DC 20208
Contractor:	Center on Education and Training for Employment The Ohio State University Columbus, Ohio 43210-1090
Interim Executive Director:	W. Michael Sherman
Disclaimer:	This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under Contract No. ED-99-CO-0013. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.
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The Educational Resources Information Center Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education (ERIC/ACVE) is 1 of 16 clearinghouses in a national information system that is funded by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI), U.S. Department of Education. This paper was developed to fulfill one of the functions of the clearinghouse—interpreting the literature in the ERIC database. This paper should be of interest to career educators, counselors, and graduate students in career education and development.

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The following people are acknowledged for their critical review of the manuscript prior to publication: Bethany Snyder, Research and Administrative Fellow, Institute for Women's Policy Research; Scott E. Hall, Associate Professor, Department of Counselor

Education and Human Services, University of Dayton; Richard L. Haid, Professional Certified Adult Mentor/Coach; and Morgan V. Lewis, Senior Research Specialist, Center on Education and Training for Employment, the Ohio State University. Susan Imel coordinated publication development and Sandra Kerka edited and formatted the manuscript.

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Changes in the nature of work and of the work force have made it increasingly difficult for adults to achieve balance in their lives. Balance may be defined as effective participation in life roles that are central to one's self-concept. Therefore, the meaning of a balanced life is different for each individual, and definitions of success must be individualized and expanded to include goals related to multiple life roles. Yet, many adults live lives devoid of balanced participation in life roles that are important to them.

To assist career development practitioners in helping individuals deal with life-role balance, this paper begins by sketching the evolving role of work in society, describing the factors that are driving the emerging trends in work. These contextual factors foster or inhibit the potential for achieving life-role balance.

Donald Super's life-space theory is presented as a framework for adult career development. Using this framework, the paper discuses how individuals can crystalize their life-role identities, develop life-role readiness and adaptability, and move from role conflict toward life-role integration.

The discussion is placed within the larger context of changing demographics, increasing cultural diversity, and the need to adopt a multicultural mindset, recognizing that different cultural values influence how individuals understand and achieve life-role balance. The paper concludes by depicting the movement away from narrowly defined notions of career development toward the concept of human development.

Information on the topics in this paper may be found in the ERIC database using the following descriptors: *Career Development, Change, Coping, *Family Work Relationship, *Individual Development, *Job Satisfaction, *Life Satisfaction, *Quality of Life, Role. Asterisks indicate descriptors that are particularly relevant.

Introduction

> *"Balance: A state of stability, as of the body or emotions; a state of harmony"*
> (Random House Dictionary)

Many adults rarely experience "balance" living their lives in the 21st century. More common is the experience of disequilibrium and substantial stress as adults attempt to find balance in their lives. That many adults experience a lack of balance in their lives is not surprising. Workers in the United States work longer hours and take less vacation time than do workers in most other countries. The average American worker today works approximately 200 hours more per year to maintain the same standard of living experienced in the early 1970s. Had workers in the 1970s been presented with this offer (i.e., work an extra month per year for the same standard of living), there undoubtedly would have been a huge public outcry! As we discuss in this monograph, rather than a public outcry, workers today express more mild rumblings of discontent with the fact that they are working longer hours and taking less vacation time than their counterparts around the world (Reich 2001). They are also experiencing anxiety about the prospect of being laid off from work as record downsizing occurs in the United States.

However, Americans are not the only workers to experience excessive work hours and anxiety related to job security. Overwork is not restricted by national boundaries. Levey and Levey (1998) note that in Japan the second leading cause of death, after cancer, is referred to as *karoshi*, which is defined as "death from overwork." Overwork is also not gender biased. Many women "report a lack of time together with their family as their greatest family concern" (Levey and Levey 1998, p. 231). In fact, many dual career parents experience conflict trying to find time to express their work and family commitments (Herr and Cramer 1996).

Technological advances have not necessarily helped lessen the life balance conflict many workers experience. In fact, predictions concerning ways in which technology would create a leisure society long ago gave way to reality. Rather than creating more leisure time, advances in technology have made it easier (and often necessary) to work more hours. Unfortunately, technology can change work, but it cannot change the fact that days still occur in 24-hour cycles. Extended work hours come at the expense of other life roles. For some, this is not problematic because work is their primary role in life. For those who place a high value on nonwork life roles, spending more time at work and reducing the time spent in other life roles creates inter- and intrapersonal conflict. This fact raises three important points concerning life-role balance: (1) defining a "balanced life" occurs at the level of the individual, (2) definitions of "success" must be individualized and expanded to encompass goals related to multiple life-role participation, and (3) many adults live lives devoid of balanced participation in the life roles that are important to them.

These points were made decades ago by the eminent career development scholar, Donald Super (1957, 1980, 1990). In fact, several of Super's theory assumptions address the importance of effective life-role participation. For example, Super noted the following (Super, Savickas, and Super 1996, pp. 125-126):

1. The process of career development is essentially that of developing and implementing occupational self-concepts. It is a synthesizing and compromising process in which the self-concept is a product of the interaction of inherited aptitudes, physical makeup, opportunity to observe and play various roles, and evaluations of the extent to which the results of role-playing meet with the approval of supervisors and peers.

2. Work satisfactions and life satisfactions depend on the extent to which an individual finds adequate outlets for abilities, needs, values, interests, personality traits, and self-concepts. Satisfactions depend on establishment in a type of work, a work situation, and a way of life in which one can play the kind of role that growth and exploratory experiences have led one to consider congenial and appropriate.

3. The degree of satisfaction people attain from work is proportional to the degree to which they have been able to implement self-concepts.

4. Work and occupation provide a focus for personality organization for most men and women, although for some individuals this focus is peripheral, incidental, or even nonexistent. Then other foci, such as leisure activities and homemaking, may be central. Social traditions, such as sex-role stereotyping and modeling, racial and ethnic biases, and the opportunity structure, as well as individual differences are important determinants of preferences for such roles as worker, student, leisurite, homemaker, and citizen.

Super's theoretical assumptions highlight the importance of life-role salience as well as the variation of role salience across persons. Life roles do not resemble silos. Rather than isolated entities, life roles are more like interconnected root systems with each branch contributing to the life of the tree. Thus, we contend that the total constellation of life roles must be considered in the career development process. In this light, Super's theory assumptions seem particularly relevant today as people seek to cope with fluid work lives and deal effectively with multiple life-role commitments. Therefore, Super's life space theory is the core theory we use to discuss the important topic of life-role balance. Life space theory focuses on the life structure, which Super, Savickas, and Super (1996) described as follows:

> The life structure is comprised of the social elements that constitute a life which are arranged in a pattern of core and peripheral roles. This arrangement, or life structure, forms the basic configuration of a person's life; a design that organizes and channels the person's engagement in society, including occupational choice. Usually two or three core roles hold a central place and other roles are peripheral or absent. (p. 128)

Key to achieving life-role balance is clarifying which roles are central and which are peripheral. Values are primary factors in clarifying role salience. Before discussing in more detail the notion of "life-role balance" within the context of Super's life space theory, however, it is important to review the evolving nature of work in contemporary society.

Work: A Critical (and Evolving) Role in Contemporary Society

Despite the fact that adults play multiple life roles and each of us defines a "balanced life" differently, work, perhaps more than any other life role, contributes to one's sense of purpose and identity in contemporary society. Support for this statement is found in our everyday experience by considering the ways in which individuals typically introduce themselves to each other. Experience tells us that the most common question people ask when they meet for the first time is: What do you do? Seldom do people respond to this question by noting their community service initiatives, parenting activities, or leisure pursuits. Responses to this seemingly innocuous question typically focus on what one does to earn a living. Such interactions reinforce the contention that in a fluid industrial society occupation is the principal determinant of social status (Super 1976). They also support Sigmund Freud's statement that "work is the individual's link to reality." For better or worse, our choice of work colors the perceptual lens through which others often view us and through which we often view ourselves. For many people, work identifies a person more clearly than any other single characteristic. The question may be asked, however, whether the activities in which we engage to earn a living will maintain their dominant status in the 21st century.

Recent developments in the nature of work bring into question the viability of using what one does to earn a living as the primary descriptor of one's identity. Many people are realizing the earning a good living is no substitute for living a good life. In part, this is due to the fact that many organizations are downsizing in unprecedented numbers. Organizational hierarchies are flattening, resulting in fewer career ladders to climb. Contingent work forces are emerging to replace the long-term employee. Computers are replacing workers and adults are forced to acknowledge that, although they have a job today, they may be unemployed tomorrow—regardless of how competent they are or how hard they work (Rifkin 1995). Many workers struggle to navigate the choppy waters they experience in their work. As they attempt to smooth their career turbulence they realize that old solutions for increasing job security (e.g., working harder) have little impact on new situations. These shifts have led some to suggest that "work has ended" and the "career has died" (Bridges 1994; Rifkin 1995).

Moreover, these shifts in work are causing workers to reconsider their definition of "success." That is, as career ladders disappear and hard work is no longer a key to career achievement, a "successful" career can no longer be defined as reaching the top of the ladder. Not surprisingly, many now seek success in life, not just in work. Because our life structures reflect our individual values and commitments, success must be defined in personal terms. The degree to which we are each able to find opportunities for expressing our personal values in our life roles will be the yardstick that many people in the 21st century use to measure their success (Maccoby and Terzi 1981).

Such statements suggest that we will approach work differently in the 21st century. For example, Maccoby and Terzi (1981) predicted that workers in the 21st century will focus more on achieving personal and professional growth. Maccoby and Terzi described this emerging approach to work as a "self-fulfillment ethic." Those adhering to the self-fulfillment ethic seek work that is not so consuming that it denies opportunities for involvement in family, community, leisure, and other life roles. Rather than "living to work," many are more interested in "working to live" (Niles, Herr, and Hartung, in press). If the prediction made by Maccoby and Terzi is accurate, then the goal of achieving life-role balance will be shared by an increasing number of us and will become a primary consideration during the job search process.

Already, employers are acknowledging this concern. Many examples exist of ways in which employers are attempting to respond to their employees' needs for help in balancing life-role activities. For example, to help employees cope with multiple life-role demands, some employers (e.g., PricewaterhouseCoopers) offer concierge services to take care of daily details such as automobile repair work, grocery shopping, and laundry. PricewaterhouseCoopers also offers telecommuting options in which employees can work from home in offices outfitted by the company, flexible work hours, and unlimited sick leave. Other employers (e.g., IBM) set core hours when employees must be on site. Other than those hours, employees can determine the rest of their workday. IBM is also restructuring the traditional 40-hour manufacturing week. For example, IBM offers employees the option of working 12-hour shifts until workers accumulate 40 hours in a week.

Clearly, many companies are examining ways to restructure work to make it more responsive to employees' growing concerns about fitting work into life. Obviously, a tightening labor market gives prospective employees an advantage in the benefits they can secure from employers. In fact, some might argue that the success of companies today hinges as much on their commitment to work/life issues as on introducing new technologies and products. For example, Marriott Corporation started a "Balance of Family Work/Life" program in response to stiff competition for the best workers. Companies such as Ford Motor Company offer weeklong workshops to employees on topics such as "Work/Life Integration." Johnson and Johnson offers a "Wednesday dinner" program in which employees can order cooked meals to take home for family dinners. In numerous ways, the traditional 9 to 5 workday is being reshaped to create the potential for more flexibility in work hours and the chance for more balance in life. However, the reality is that Americans continue to work longer, work from home, and even work while on vacation. The blurring of the boundaries between work, home, and other life roles creates new challenges as we try to live more balanced lives. These are some of the realities regarding living a balanced life. The myth may be that we are more effective at living a balanced life today than we were previously.

Despite shifts in the 9 to 5 workday and other employer-based attempts at helping employees live more balanced lives, it appears that work continues to play the central role in the life experience of most Americans. Not only do Americans continue to place an extremely high value on work, they also continue to take a view toward work that is steeped in values emanating from the historical context dating to the founding of the

United States (Niles, Herr, and Hartung, in press). For example, Niles and his colleagues note that values emanating from the dominant culture in America emphasize individual control in career development (e.g., motivation, discipline, perseverance, goal-directedness) and deemphasize the role that sociological variables (e.g., the opportunity structure, the economy, the family, socioeconomic status, racism, sexism) play in shaping one's career. Thus, if a person has a "successful career," people associate very positive attributions to the person who is a "success." The corresponding assumption is that the "unsuccessful" person is inferior. Denial of the sociological factors influencing the pattern of one's career development and the centrality of work in contemporary society becomes problematic because it creates an inextricable link between work and self-worth (ibid.). The centrality of work in identity formation also clearly diminishes the important ways in which nonwork life roles contribute to self-worth and self-efficacy.

The self-fulfillment ethic described by Maccoby and Terzi (1981) suggests that sociological conceptualizations of work will become more prominent in American society and work will become more contextualized (Niles, Herr, and Hartung (in press). Another implication identified by Niles and associates is that people will search for self-fulfillment and self-expression in multiple life roles. These authors contend that as more workers focus on working to live rather than living to work, the question becomes what is one working to live for? That is, what other life-role commitments influence the goals that one hopes to accomplish through work activity? These questions have implications for the sort of assistance adults will require when attempting to clarify and articulate their life-role self-concepts. Increasingly, adults will struggle with issues that reflect the intertwining of life roles (Super, Savickas, and Super 1996). They also suggest that as people seek self-fulfillment, they will seek to experience more enjoyment, or a sense of play, in their life-role activities.

Play and Life-Role Integration

> *"Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he [sic] grows up."* (Pablo Picasso)

Picasso presents us with an intriguing and far-reaching problem relative to self-fulfillment, career development, and job satisfaction. For the most part, children spontaneously do what they enjoy. They play. Through play, children satisfy intrinsic needs (i.e., needs arising from within us) by doing whatever naturally motivates them. Children engage in playful activities and experiences that make them happy. At play, children act spontaneously without being forced or compelled by others to act. Without knowing it, through play children prepare themselves in many ways for later life (Savickas 1989).

As childhood unfolds into adolescence and eventually adulthood, people often find that play becomes less and less a part of their lives in school, at home, in the workplace, and elsewhere. This occurs, in part, because society expects and compels people to learn and master the tasks associated with various life roles such as the role of worker. It also occurs increasingly in contemporary society because of myriad structural changes in, and stresses on, the family, the work force, and the educational system. Moreover, it results from rapid

advances in information and communication technology that constantly bombard people with media images of what they should aspire to be or do. Such changes and advances may often leave us feeling demoralized and compelled to be something different from what we may truly be capable of or, indeed, even want. This situation often lessens our happiness as "mass communications, especially television and movies, effectively make us all one competitive group even as they destroy our more intimate social networks...none of us can attain the fantasy lives we see on television" (Neese and Williams quoted in Buss 2000, p. 16).

Externally imposed, yet internally felt, stresses and strains may cause much of the spontaneous enjoyment once derived from childhood play to be sacrificed for the need or motive to satisfy the multitude of demands and expectations people encounter in today's global society. In this context, people often find themselves losing sight of or sacrificing their genuine and unique sense of humanness and personal values to satisfy societally or culturally imposed values and expectations. Relative to life roles, "When a person is being moved by some control of rewards and punishments outside of self, we speak of the person being forced or compelled to act. Under the latter circumstance, the assembly line worker refers to self as a wage slave, and the child driven to practice a musical instrument by an ambitious parent complains of drudgery" (Bordin 1994, p. 55).

The problem Picasso raises, and the prospects for its resolution, involve developing and sustaining a playful attitude as people think about and approach their life roles (Bordin 1994). Success in this task means optimizing our levels of life and career satisfaction. It means setting the foundation for balancing intrinsic needs (i.e., our playfulness) with effort (i.e., skill and knowledge mastery) and extrinsic needs (i.e., meeting social and cultural expectations). Integrating, or fusing, the imperative of work and play forms a central process that fosters career development across the life span. The vocational psychologist and career development theorist Edward Bordin (1994) summed it up this way:

> I do not deny that work or earning a living is one of the imperatives that humans face, but I think we must not overlook another vital imperative, that is, the need for a playful attitude. Human nature is such that when the work imperative leaves no room for playfulness and self-expression, people become wage slaves engaged in alienated toil. (p. 54)

Similarly, individuals at any stage of the life span can explore the increasing multiplicity of different roles they play in their lives. In this way, they begin to conceive of themselves and their identities as composed of a variety of roles including worker, family member, leisurite, student, and so on. Their involvement in and commitment to these multiple roles will vary over their life spans. That is, they will participate and feel emotionally invested in different roles to varying degrees at different times depending on the circumstances of their lives.

Bordin's comments emphasize the importance of infusing play in life-role activities to achieve a greater sense of self-fulfillment and self-expression in life. Bordin also highlights

the fact that the meaning individuals attach to life roles evolves over time. To paraphrase one of Super's (1957) theoretical assumptions, "life-role self-concepts evolve over time, making choice and adjustment pertaining to life-role participation a continual process." Redefining "success" to embrace a focus on experiencing a greater sense of self-fulfillment and self-expression may be essential for coping effectively with the evolving changes in work. Clearly, the centrality of work in people's lives requires career educators and career counselors to understand the ways in which changes occurring in work influence the evolving meaning individuals attach to work and other life roles.

Changes in Work and Workers

As noted earlier, the world of work and the world of the worker are changing, thereby presenting new challenges to employers and employees. If career educators and career counselors are going to help people experience a greater sense of self-fulfillment, optimal career and life satisfaction, and a sense of play in their life activities, then they will need to thoroughly understand the changes occurring in work and in workers.

Work is changing, in large part, due to the transition from a manufacturing to an information and technology-based society. The emergence of increasingly sophisticated technology has resulted in the growing existence of near-workerless factories as computers perform jobs previously filled by humans. As noted previously, this shift has contributed to corporate downsizing occurring in record numbers. Statistics about high levels of global unemployment, corporate downsizing, and a jobless economic recovery appear daily in various news media (Rifkin 1995). Such changes provide strong evidence that the social contract between employers and employees is being redefined in the 21st century (Rifkin 1995; Savickas 1993).

With corporate layoffs occurring in unprecedented numbers, many workers realize that blind loyalty to corporate employers is unwise. Workers are less concerned with climbing the corporate ladder and are now searching for self-fulfillment in life roles beyond that of worker (Maccoby and Terzi 1981; Savickas 1993). Workers who have lost their jobs via corporate downsizing are less willing to sacrifice everything for their careers when the organizations they work for are so willing to sacrifice them (Niles, Herr, and Hartung, in press). Those who have been sacrificed are often left feeling betrayed, anxious about competing, and insecure about the future (Savickas 1993). Given these shifts, it is not surprising that many workers experience substantial anxiety due to ambiguous career paths, a lack of job security, confusion over how to obtain training to update their skills, and frustration related to conflicting life-role demands. Workers are beginning to realize that coping effectively with new challenges in the world of work requires taking a new approach not only to work, but also to life. Balancing the demands of multiple life roles becomes more challenging when we consider the demographic changes occurring in the work force.

Changing Demographics at Work

To help adults cope effectively with current career challenges, career practitioners also need to understand the changing demographics occurring in the workplace. Niles, Herr, and Hartung (in press) point out that the "typical" American worker is no longer an employed father married to a full-time homemaker and mother. More typical is the family in which both partners are employed, or in which a single parent is employed. Media stories depicting the experiences of increasing numbers of dual-career parents and single parent households are common today, Dual-career parents, once the anomaly, are now the norm. The term, "single-parent household" describes many households today. Workers are keenly aware that, while making a living, they are attempting to live lives in which they can effectively manage the demands of multiple life roles (Super, Savickas, and Super 1996). Dual-career parents and single parents struggle to balance work and family responsibilities. Often, the demands required to cope successfully with multiple life roles create stress levels that are overwhelming. Children from all ethnic and economic backgrounds lament the lack of parental attention and guidance they receive today (Levey and Levey 1998).

Results of most studies indicate that, although men and women share the workplace, they often do not share the household responsibilities (Niles and Goodnough 1996). In most instances, women carry major responsibilities for household and parenting tasks—even when they are also working outside the home (Stoltz-Loike 1992). The stress experienced by dual-career parents often manifests itself in increasing tension between couples, children feeling isolated from parents, and parents feeling as though they are living fragmented lives. Single parents in the work force often fare no better when confronted with the task of balancing work and family responsibilities, often with fewer financial resources than dual-career parents.

Thus, it is no surprise that many workers today feel like achieving balanced participation in multiple life roles is a moving target. For example, workers must cope with challenges such as finding high-quality child care and elder care, accessing educational and training opportunities while working full-time and caring for a family, and finding time to engage in recreational activities. These challenges present workers with an often overwhelming life-role balancing act. Moreover, few of us have been exposed to useful role models as to how we can achieve life-role balance. Given these challenges, it is not surprising that, increasingly, adults in career counseling focus on concerns related to finding a greater sense of balance in their lives (Anderson and Niles 1995).

As noted previously, the good news is that many employers are starting to take notice of their employees' multiple life-role needs. Many companies have realized that when workers become anxious and fragmented by the demands from multiple life roles, they are often more dissatisfied and less productive at work. Keen competition for qualified workers also forces prospective employers to respond to workers' concerns with innovative employment offers that address the quality of life issues many workers experience today. However, the reality is that not all employers are so responsive. Moreover, many workers are confused as to how to manage multiple life roles effectively, even when they

work for employers who offer services to assist them with multiple life-role demands. Developing the competencies that are required for effectively balancing life roles may very well be the most substantial challenge confronting workers today. Thus, it is useful to examine more closely the underlying factors that are driving the emerging trends in work. These factors provide the backdrop against which adults must attempt to achieve a greater sense of balance in life.

Factors Driving the Emerging Trends in Work

Niles, Herr, and Hartung (in press) contend that the rapidity of change in the organization, language, and content of work in the United States are proceeding more comprehensively and quickly than it is possible to fully comprehend. Niles and associates identify nine underlying factors driving the emerging trends in work that are profound and diverse. They include at least the following:

1. *The pervasive effects of advanced technology in workplaces of all kinds and in virtually all occupations.* It is difficult to overstate the degree to which advanced forms of technology have altered and are continuing to modify the content and the processes of work. The application of computer technology, telecommunications, and the Internet has allowed work to be done throughout the world without regard to space, time, or political boundaries. But, perhaps more pragmatically, advanced technology in its multiple forms has had a number of effects: changed the nature of jobs in many occupational sectors; reduced the number of workers required to maintain and operate "high-tech" factories and other workplaces; given rise to the need for "knowledge workers," persons who not only know how to do particular work, but why it is being done; elevated the general level of education required for work; and made workplaces more information rich—dependent on information for machine operation and control (robots, lathes, aircraft, etc.), for quality control, and for decision making about such areas as managing inventory, tracking the distribution of products shipped, and understanding the nature of one's consumers of products or services.

   Embedded within the meaning of the term "advanced technology" are many emphases. Certainly central to this arena are computers, their software systems, and their increasing sophistication. The omnipresence of computers in homes and workplaces, transportation and financial services, international trade, entertainment, and other spheres of life has made us increasingly dependent on the rapidity and accuracy with which computers process, analyze, and transmit information. But, in these senses, computers are only tools, enablers if you will, by which other forms of advanced technology can flourish. The Internet, for example, is an international linkage of computers, telecommunications, graphics, and knowledge bases from sites around the world, making comprehensive information accessible to persons in any setting or geographic location as long as they have computer access to an Internet portal. The ability of computers to analyze and model information, calculate its characteristics, and transmit such analyses is the support system for numerous advances: in the understanding and treatment of diseases that have a genetic base; in pharmaceuticals, particularly medicines; in the development of multifuel vehicles; in the develop-

ment of composite and smart materials, with built-in sensors to monitor stress and fatigue in materials used for construction of bridges and buildings, aircraft, automobiles, space stations, and propulsion systems; in biotechnology, the alteration of foods to make them more abundant and disease free, custom tailored to environmental conditions in which they need to thrive; in neurosciences; in global positioning and tracking of satellites and vehicles; in the transfer of currencies among nations electronically; and in many other applications of science and technology. In large measure, the global economy as it is emerging would be impossible to achieve without the availability of computers, sophisticated software, telecommunications, and related processes.

2. *A changing social psychology of work.* The social psychology of work is changing, in large part due to the effects of advanced technology in the workplace, as well as changing management styles that encourage workers to participate more fully in decision making about such emphases as best practices, problem solving, flextime, and the scheduling of work. The relationships between managers and employees, co-workers, and workers and customers tend to be more fluid and less rigid as technologies free persons from some aspects of their work and require more interaction among them. More work is being done by teams. Employers at more levels of the workplace have access to information and the opportunity to make work decisions that were previously reserved for managers only. Computers have provided some workers more autonomy in their work; for other workers, however, the need for continuous data entry and monitoring has imposed a new form of "assembly line" mentality and new ways to implement surveillance of worker productivity. Depending upon particular workplace cultures, the introduction of advanced technology in the workplace can reduce personal privacy and autonomy, change the flow of information among workers and managers, and enhance or demean workers' feelings and self-perceptions related to their interactions with computers or other forms of advanced technology.

3. *Participation in international economic competition*, as reflected in the growing global economy as well as in regional competitive structures such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, the European Union, and the Association of South East Asian Nations. As a result, workers who are bilingual and understand the economic and political systems of nations with which trade is being conducted will have skills that are increasingly prized. More workers are likely to spend some part of their career working abroad, or in communication with persons in other nations with whom they conduct export-import, financial, industrial, or business transactions.

4. *Changing employment opportunities* as corporations and other organizations of work reduce in number their permanent work forces, increase the number of workers who are part-time or temporary employees, and outsource or subcontract particular functions to other work organizations. In such contexts, many former full-time or new workers are now working several part-time jobs to earn adequate income, in some cases without the likelihood of permanent institutional identity or adequate benefits (e.g., health care).

5. *New concepts of careers are emerging.* A new language of career is emerging, which suggests that since workplaces are changing rapidly and frequently downsizing the number and characteristics of their permanent work forces, more and more workers are becoming responsible for their own career management. In an earlier era of long-term worker employment in one firm, the career development of a worker tended to be primarily the role of the workplace and its managers. As the workplace found it necessary to do so, workers were retrained and reassigned to new jobs within the firm, and there was a frequently implicit "social contract" between employer and employee, which emphasized worker loyalty to the firm that was rewarded by retention and loyalty to the worker by the employer. Increasingly, that historical social contract is being set aside, requiring that individual workers be able to keep their occupational skills and competencies at a high level, constantly engaged in learning to remain marketable, and be able to "sell" their competencies to employers. Part of the uncertainty of sustained employment for individual workers in such scenarios is reflected in the propensity of many workers to work harder and harder, having less and less time for other aspects of their life, including marriage and children. An interesting corollary to the changes in work that have been discussed previously is that as workplaces and the occupational structures undergo dramatic change, there are both employment uncertainties for many workers and, at the same time, serious skill shortages. In instances where such skill shortages exist, many workers employed in such contexts are under significant pressure to make up for the shortage of needed workers by "slaving away" and intensifying the hours they work.

   Thus, there are multiple patterns of uncertainty and overcommitment reflected throughout the occupational structure. And there are analyses that strongly urge persons to prepare themselves to engage in Protean Careers (Hall and Associates 1996), careers in which they are prepared to adapt to change, be personally flexible, and be able to anticipate emerging trends and to transform their skills and attitudes to accommodate such changes.

6. *As a function of the increases in the use of advanced technology throughout the occupational structure and the transfer of selected industries to other nations, there has been an increase in the average educational requirements necessary for employment in many occupations.* In some industries, advanced technology has eliminated the need for some unskilled and semiskilled jobs. In other instances, middle management jobs, which tended to be the positions that collected and analyzed data for decision making, have been eliminated because information is now likely to be shared throughout the entire job spectrum as a function of the use of computers to monitor and control specific tasks. Thus, the interaction of person and machine has grown in symbiotic terms, modifying what workers do in manufacturing and other industries. For example, in the automobile industry, more and more of the work of building a car is performed by robots, which are in turn controlled by computers, which are in turn the subject of programming, troubleshooting, and operating by human beings. Such a scenario is replayed in different ways throughout the occupational structure. The results include "high-tech" factories that need far fewer persons involved in manufacturing or in other industries

even though the productivity of such factories continues to increase. The corollaries include the expectation that the human being operating the advanced technology in virtually any context will be required to take on more responsibility and know more than was true when most industrial or business operations were done manually, not technologically. Few emerging occupations exist for people who cannot read, write, and do basic mathematics. Thus, people who have weak educational backgrounds are likely to be increasingly vulnerable to unemployment and to job opportunities that are uncertain.

7. Because of the growing educational requirements of jobs, the importance of science and technology for product development and marketing, and the need to find the competitive edge in new processes, *many workplaces are essentially "learning organizations" populated by various kinds of "knowledge workers."*

8. *An increased proportion of workers will not remain in a specific job in the same company for an extended period of time.* Because of the dynamic quality of work and work organizations, persons will likely engage in seven or more jobs in their work life, frequently engaging in retraining within a context of lifelong learning in order to manage their own career development. Many workers in the near future will essentially be "world workers," moving among nations in pursuit of suitable work. Currently, there is a global labor surplus that is continuing to spur widespread immigration to nations like the United States, where the unemployment rate is low and job creation is high. In such circumstances, persons search for work wherever it can be found, competing for jobs with domestic workers, sometimes filling skill shortages in particular nations where they exist. But, such transnational mobility may cause rootlessness and culture shock for many workers. In such cases, nations will need to alter their education and support systems to accommodate the growing numbers of guest workers, immigrants, and temporary residents moving across national boundaries.

9. *A final factor has to do with the changing demographics of the work force.* In particular, in an increasing number of nations, women are entering the paid work force in large numbers and remaining in the work force after marriage and childbearing. Many of these women are single parents, many are one part of a dual-career couple, and most of them have children. Such circumstances change patterns of childrearing as well as the nature of the workplace, expectations for workplaces to offer daycare for workers' children, flexible work schedules for parents to have more ability to attend to their children's needs as well as their work responsibility, and more pressure, for certain categories of workers, to engage in telecommuting from home.

Emerging Trends in Work and the Emerging Context of the Worker

Persons work for many reasons—economic, psychological, and social. For many of us, our personal identity merges with our work identity. Who we are fuses with what we do. Depending upon how much we work and how infrequently we engage in nonwork and

other life roles, some of us are labeled as "workaholics" or persons "overcommitted" to work. Those of us in this category are perceived as needing more balance in our work and nonwork roles (even though some of us may have consciously chosen to construct a life that centers on work).

But one does not have to be a "workaholic" to be in need of great life-role balance. Working mothers report that they have virtually no time for themselves (Stolze-Loike 1992). When they are not at their place of employment, they are engaged in childcare or other homemaking activities. In such cases, the issue is not being overcommitted to work but rather having so little time that is discretionary. In a sense, women who work for pay and also raise children and engage in homemaking are engaged in two categories of work: paid and nonpaid. What they are less likely to be engaged in is leisure roles and roles that are freely chosen.

As suggested by the nine factors described here, the changes in the workplace and the various types of pressure workers experience are reflected in the home and among families. In families in which both parents work, parents frequently come to their childrearing or other marital roles in a state of fatigue (Stolze-Loike 1992). The strain of their work carries into the home. In selected occupations, where parents are subjected to pressures to work significant amounts of overtime because of skill shortages in their workplace, time for balancing nonwork and other life roles becomes limited and problematic. In other circumstances, where one or both parents are under continuous pressure to keep their competencies sharp and new, they may find much of their discretionary time composed of taking courses and learning new skills to be able to compete successfully for work. The pressure for persons in dual-career or dual-income families to work harder and to push themselves to remain at a high level of skill competence is also often indirectly changing the nature of childrearing in the United States. Just as corporations outsource tasks that they previously did in house to organizations outside the corporation that have specific specialties, many families are doing the same with regard to maintaining their home and children. They are outsourcing day care and birthday parties; they are eating out or ordering food to be delivered; they are ordering groceries online rather than going to the store and selecting them; they are using cleaning services, lawn and snow removal services, and other mechanisms to try to balance work and nonwork roles. The term "virtual parenting" has come into the language to describe parents whose job requires them to work late or travel a lot. Their solution is to try to use e-mail, fax, audiotapes, family conference calls, and voice mail to stay in touch with their children (Shellenbarger 1999).

Niles, Herr, and Hartung (in press) point out that the strains on families and the responses cited are really for the affluent parts of society, not impoverished persons or single parents. These persons are likely to be far more circumspect in how they can commit their resources to family needs. Single parents who work two jobs or more to maintain financial viability may also have to use day care, but, where possible, they are likely to use a relative or a friend, rather then an expensive preschool or day care. Frequently, impoverished people, whose institutional work is uncertain, who are frequently laid off or terminated as unskilled jobs are replaced by outsourcing or other mechanisms, may spend

much of their discretionary time in seeking work, engaging in several part-time jobs, or in other roles that reduce the psychological sense, if not the physical reality, of engaging in balancing the nonwork and other life roles. Many of these persons are on the edge of financial insolvency all of the time, trying to engage in multiple ways to obtain funds while taking on all of the tasks required by their children and their homes. As Reich (2001) suggests, these are persons who live on crumbs, not cake. They may be the "working poor" or the long-term unemployed. They are persons for whom balancing work, nonwork, and other life roles is a fantasy that is not part of their reality. Such divides between the affluent and the poor continue to fragment this nation and its people. The economically poor are not just rich people without money. Their culture, their worldviews, their expectations, and their realities about the roles they do and can play are quite at odds with those of other segments of the population. In a stunning statistic that affirms such disparities, Reich (2001) has written that "Bill Gates' [the founder/owner/CEO of Microsoft] net worth alone is equal to the total net worth of the bottom 50% of American families" (p. 35). In order to balance work, nonwork, and other life roles, such an option must exist. It does not for all families.

Thus, to be useful in today's context, career development theories and career practitioners must be responsive to the myriad contextual factors driving intraindividual and extraindividual factors that foster or inhibit our potential for achieving life-role balance. We now focus more directly on applying Super's life-space theory to the task of achieving life-role balance.

Super's Life-Space Theory: A Useful Framework for Achieving Life Balance

As we have noted, more than any other career development theorist, Super (1957, 1980, 1990) recognized that each of us, in large part, balances life differently, due to the contextual affordances life provides to each of us. Super incorporated this fact into his work when he expanded his career development theory to include a "life-space" segment. Specifically, Super noted that people have different life spaces due to personal factors (e.g., needs, values, interests, aptitudes) and situational factors (e.g., family, neighborhood of residence, country of residence, economic policies, the existence of gender and racial bias). These personal and situational factors interact to shape our life-role self-concepts and to present us with career development tasks with which we must cope successfully to manage our career development effectively. In these ways, Super's life-space theory segment merges with his self-concept and life-span theory segments (1990) to create a career development theory that embraces heterogeneity and fluidity in adult career development.

In describing the life space, Super (1980) identified nine primary life roles: child, student, worker, partner, parent, citizen, homemaker, leisurite, and pensioner. He also noted that each life role tends to be played in a particular theater (e.g., home, school, work, community). Today, just 20 years after Super's landmark article, we acknowledge that playing individual roles in multiple theaters is a typical occurrence. For example, laptop computers make it possible to work in a coffee shop or at home. The role of student can be played at school or at home as in the case of web-based training courses. Thus, the fluidity of life-role activities has increased to the point that individual theaters commonly contain multiple roles. This fluidity makes balancing life-role activity an even greater challenge. Additionally, because we can now play multiple roles in a single theater, which life role we are playing at any particular point in time may not be readily apparent to others. For example, the person working on a laptop computer in a coffee shop may be engaging in work but observers may assume she is engaging in a leisurely latte. The definition of the role activity depends on the individual's situation and goals more than the location of the activity or the theater in which the role is played. Thus, balancing life-role activities requires goal clarity on a continuous basis. This level of self-awareness is substantially greater than when the boundaries between life roles and theaters were more clearly drawn than they are today.

The blurring of boundaries between roles and theaters also requires us to be intentional in our life-role behavior and, at times, to communicate our intentions to others. For example, engaging in conversation with a friend may be acceptable when we are enjoying a latte in a coffee shop, but not acceptable when we have chosen the coffee shop as the location for completing a business report in a timely manner. It may be difficult for our friends to know which life role (worker or leisurite) we are engaging in unless we tell them. The blurring of boundaries between roles and theaters requires a greater emphasis

on assertively communicating our activities to others. There is, therefore, the need not only to possess goal clarity but also to be able to be appropriately assertive in communicating goal intentions related to life-role behaviors.

Understanding Life Roles

Making decision about when, where, and how we play various life roles requires us to have a clear understanding about the life roles we play and the importance we attach to them. Super, Savickas, and Super (1996) noted that the "social elements that constitute a life are arranged in a pattern of core and peripheral roles and this arrangement, or life structure, forms the basic configuration of a person's life" (p. 128). Usually, a few roles dominate a person's life structure. Decisions about which life role takes precedence at any point in time depend heavily upon one's value structure. Work satisfactions and life satisfactions depend on the extent to which an individual becomes established in "a type of work, a work situation, and a way of life" that reflects the roles that previous life experiences "have led one to consider congenial and appropriate" (ibid., p. 125).

Super illustrated the life-space theory segment in his life-career rainbow. The "rainbow" provides "a powerful heuristic in which to consider how various social roles may intersect throughout the life span" (Blustein 1997, p. 262). Individuals can use the rainbow to plot their previous and current life-role activities. They can discuss the values they seek to express in each life role and their level of satisfaction with their current activities. Future scenarios can also be clarified as individuals identify future life roles in which they hope to participate and the values they hope to express in each future life role. The rainbow also highlights the fact that various personal (e.g., values, needs, and interests) and situational determinants (e.g., community, school, and social policies) influence when and how people play particular life roles. Individuals can discuss how these determinants influence their current and, potentially, their future life-role participation. Clearly, crystallizing and specifying current and future life-role goals requires us to operate from a shared definition of "role."

The term "role" refers to behavior rather than position. Turner (1968) conceptualized a role as follows:

> In any interactive situation, behavior, sentiments, and motives tend to be differentiated into units, which can be called roles; once roles are differentiated, elements of behavior, sentiment, and motives which appear in the same situation tend to be assigned to the existing roles. (p. 552)

Thus, it is important to note that life roles are *enacted*, rather than *occupied*, because life roles reflect interactions among personal determinants, situational determinants, and societal expectations as well as the individual's interpretation and expression of those expectations. "Occupying" a role suggests that roles are positions that are stagnant and rigid, which is not the case. Because of their interpretations of the life-role expectations, two individuals can express the same set of life-role expectations differently. Allport

(1963) addressed this point when he delineated specific life-role aspects that influence life-role participation and represent the interaction between the individual and the environment in life-role behavior.

Life-Role Aspects

Allport (1963) identified four significant aspects of roles that are differential determinants of how we react to given situations: role-expectations, role-conceptions, role-acceptance and role-performance.

Role-expectations are the historical and cultural prescriptions that are generally assigned to a role (e.g., the role of "worker" in the United States in the 1800s was defined very differently than it is defined today in the United States). **Role-conceptions** involve the way in which we actually perceive or interpret the role-related expectations (e.g., to be a "good" parent, I need to be a good provider, behave in a nurturing way to my children, and be fair and consistent in disciplining my children). **Role-acceptance** involves the willingness of the individual to become involved in the role (e.g., I realize the importance of leisure for life satisfaction and I choose to be an active participant in this life role). **Role-performance** involves the actual behavior of the individual in the role situation (e.g., because I interpret being a "good" citizen as being actively involved in local politics, and because I have decided that being a citizen is an important role to me, I choose to run for election to the town council). Collectively, these four meanings provide us with the foundation we use to enact the life roles we play.

Life-role aspects also serve as a complement to more general models of personal and situational determinants of role salience. For example, although Super (1980, 1990) effectively used the life-career rainbow and the arch model to communicate the personal and situational determinants that influence the degree of importance any life role holds for us, these determinants provide only general descriptions of factors that typically influence role salience. We need more specific information when we attempt to understand the life roles that are important to us. Allport's life-role aspects provide a framework for examining contextual factors (such as culture) that influence the ways in which we understand life roles.

Thus, decisions about life-role participation require substantial degrees of self-reflection, self-understanding, and self-awareness. Although multiple roles are important in our lives, at various times, we must give priority to specific life roles. Sometimes deciding which role takes priority is relatively easy (e.g., giving priority to one's job when there are low demands from one's children) and sometimes not (e.g., when the demands from job and family are concurrently high). Life roles interact in ways that can be extensive or minimal, supportive, supplementary, compensatory, or neutral (Super 1980). Life roles also interact to shape the meaning that we attach to the constellation of life roles we play. For example, a parent who works outside the home may do so, in part, to accumulate the financial resources necessary to fund better educational opportunities for her children. Another worker who is not a parent may work, in part, to accumulate financial resources

for participating in highly valued leisure activities. A parent may engage in community activities to support his daughter's leisure activities such as when a father becomes a coach for his daughter's baseball team. The constellation of our life roles contributes to the meaning and purpose we enact in life-role participation. Thus, achieving role balance is a general goal that must be operationalized individually.

Crystallizing Life-Role Identities

As a prerequisite to achieving life-role balance, it is necessary for us to crystallize our life-role identities. The crystallization process begins with the beginning of life as infants are exposed to multiple learning experiences (e.g., having nurturing parents vs. less nurturing parents, engaging in "leisure" activities). Children are exposed to life-role models in the home, community, and school. The accumulation of life-role experiences leads to general life-role beliefs (e.g., "leisure is important," "being a good citizen is essential to democracy") and self-referent life-role beliefs (e.g., "I enjoy participating in competitive team sports," "I enjoy learning," "being a good parent is important to me").

Learning experiences also lead children to draw conclusions about which roles are most important. Being aware of which life roles are important and which are peripheral helps to prioritize time and commitments. Super (1980) referred to this as understanding one's life-role salience. Life-role salience is a cornerstone for balancing life-role activities. Knowing which life roles are important in the present, however, is insufficient. Knowing which life roles will be important in the future helps guide the planning behavior of children and adolescents (e.g., if the role of student will be important after high school, then high school students need to enroll in courses that will prepare them for their postsecondary educational experiences). Because life-role self-concepts evolve over time, adults must maintain a high level of self-awareness pertaining to which life roles are most salient in the present and which are likely to be most salient in the future. The latter also guides planning behavior in adulthood as adults prepare for emerging life-role constellations (e.g., when retirement approaches).

Life is best when life roles nurture each other and offer opportunities for us to express our values. Life becomes stressful when life roles collide and provide little opportunity for value expression. Today, life roles collide with great frequency. Life-role collisions, like traffic collisions, are often unpredictable and can have very negative outcomes. To avoid collisions, drivers use defensive driving. They try to anticipate potential collisions and take corrective action before accidents occur. Driving defensively requires drivers to be alert, aware, and proactive. When we are alert, aware, and proactive in our life-role behavior, we can also *minimize* the degree to which our life roles collide and our lives become out of balance.

Being alert, aware, and proactive involves having a future orientation to emerging life-role demands (just as a driver is aware of and alert to emerging traffic patterns). For example, a worker with high salience for work and family needs to be alert to increasing work demands. When work demands increase, the worker who has a future orientation

can take proactive action by communicating to family members that he or she will be experiencing increased work activity. This communication with family members can include identifying how long this increased demand is likely to last. Family members can also be reassured that the shift in role activity is temporary. By being aware of which roles are salient, being alert to shifting demands in life-role activities, and proactively communicating with others what shifts are occurring in life-role demands, adults take steps to minimize life-role collisions. In essence, these behaviors reflect life-role adaptability.

Life-Role Adaptability

Savickas (1997) discussed this sort of proactive action in managing one's life-role participation when he suggested that Super's career adaptability construct should be used to bridge Super's (1990) life-span, life-space theory. Savickas noted that adaptability refers to "the quality of being able to change, without great difficulty, to fit new or changed circumstances" (p. 254). Given the rate of change occurring in the world of work and the life-role demands we experience, moving to conceptualizing career development from an adaptability perspective seems reasonable. The adaptability construct represents the interplay between person and environment within the career development process. It also represents the experience that many people have as they attempt to adjust to multiple life-role demands. The importance of adaptability in coping with life-role demands, or "life-role adaptability," also raises the question as to how we can achieve adaptability in each of the life roles we play. Building on Savickas' notion of career adaptability, *life-role adaptability* can be defined as "the quality of being able to change, without great difficulty, to fit new or changed circumstances" *pertaining to life-role demands.*

Developmental Competencies and Interventions for Fostering Life-Role Adaptability

Learning to cope effectively with multiple life-role demands is no small task. Achieving life-role adaptability requires knowledge, skills, and awareness pertaining to effective life-role participation. The knowledge, skills, and awareness for achieving life-role adaptability can be conceptualized from a developmental framework. For example, being able to adapt to the demands of multiple life roles assumes that we have developed the knowledge, skills, and awareness required for effective life-role participation. Developmentally, this can be conceptualized as "life-role readiness" (Niles 1998). That is, we must first develop the requisite knowledge, skills, and awareness for effective life-role participation prior to being able to demonstrate adaptability in coping with life-role demands. As noted, evolving life-role self-concepts require us to make continuous choices as to our life-role behavior. Thus, life-role readiness is grounded in life-role salience. Evolving life-role self-concepts are also influenced by contextual factors that influence our role-expectations, role-acceptance, and role-performance.

Life-Role Readiness

Two topics are useful for addressing life-role readiness: life-role salience and contextual influences on life-role behavior (e.g., family, culture, economics, new occupational options). These topics relate to developing the knowledge and awareness necessary for life-role readiness and life-role adaptability.

Life-Role Salience

Life-role salience is critical to developing life-role readiness because life-role salience provides the motivating force for life-role participation (Super, Savickas, and Super 1996). That is, if a life role is important to us, then it is likely that we will engage in the behaviors necessary to become prepared for taking on that life role. Likewise, when salience is low, there is often little motivation for developing the requisite behaviors for effective participation in that role.

Super (1980) used a tripartite model in defining life-role salience. That is, role salience is reflected in the knowledge, participation, and commitment that we have for any particular life role. Thus, salience is composed of cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions, respectively. Salience is strongest when we have knowledge about a life role, participate in it, and feel that the role is important. When one dimension is weak, then the implication is that salience is weaker. For example, if we state that a life role is important (e.g., leisure), but we know little about it and spend little time participating in it, then the implication is that salience for that role is weak.

Intervention. We can explore our life-role salience by considering questions such as the following: How do I spend my time during a typical week? How important are the different roles of life to me? What activities do I engage in to learn more about the life roles that are important to me? What do I like about participating in each of the life roles? What life roles do I think will be important to me in the future? What do I hope to accomplish in each of the life roles that will be important to me in the future? What life roles do members of my family play? What do my family members expect me to accomplish in each of the life roles? Answers to these questions help us identify the life roles in which we are currently spending most of our time, those for which we have knowledge, those to which we are emotionally committed, and those we expect to be important to us in the future. With this information we can construct strategies for preparing for salient life roles. For example, if the life role of parent is expected to be salient in the future, we can discuss ways to plan and prepare for that role. We can also begin to examine areas of potential role conflict and discuss strategies for coping with excessive demands from multiple life roles. Finally, we can consider how we are currently spending our time and whether our life-role participation is an accurate reflection of our life-role salience. When it is not, we can consider ways for reconstructing our activities to more accurately reflect what we value.

Contextual Factors Influencing Life-Role Salience

Obviously, patterns of life-role salience are significantly influenced by immediate (e.g., family, cultural heritage, level of acculturation) and distal (e.g., economics, environmental opportunities for life-role participation) contextual factors (Blustein 1994). However, many people lack an awareness of the ways in which contextual factors (such as the dominant culture and the student's culture of origin) interact with identity development to shape life-role salience (ibid.).

The Influence of the Dominant Culture. Often we simply "inherit" patterns of life-role salience that are passed on from the dominant culture. Such inheritances can be problematic when they are embedded with beliefs based on gender and racial stereotypes. For example, researchers have consistently found gender differences that coincide with traditional sex-role expectations in life-role salience (e.g., women participating more in home and family and expecting more from this life role than men [see Niles and Goodnough 1996]). Women who have high salience for the worker role are placed at an obvious disadvantage in the work force by such traditional expectations. Also, men limit their opportunities for participating in the home and family when they adhere to traditional expectations for life-role salience. By raising our awareness of the influence of the dominant culture on life-role salience, it becomes less likely that beliefs reflecting racist and sexist attitudes will influence our beliefs about life-role salience.

The Influence of Culture of Origin. Considering issues related to the influence of the dominant culture on life-role salience can also lead to focusing on ways in which culture of origin influences our life-role salience beliefs. Different cultures emphasize different values in life roles (e.g., the person from an Eurocentric cultural background who seeks to express self-actualization and autonomy in her career choice or the person from an Asian culture who seeks to express familial expectation in his career choice). By considering the ways in which culture influences life-role salience, we become aware of how our cultural backgrounds influence our life-role salience and we learn about differing patterns in role salience across cultures.

Intervention. Career practitioners can encourage people to identify how they perceive and interpret the role-expectations emanating from their cultures of origin and how these expectations influence their decisions as to whether a particular life role is important. Particular attention can be paid to exploring how these expectations influence people's understandings of the behaviors required for effective role-performance.

Borodovsky and Ponterotto (1994) suggest one specific activity that may provide opportunities for discussing these topics. They identify the *family genogram* as a useful tool for exploring the interaction between family background, cultural prescriptions, and career planning. The genogram provides a tool for tracking occupational decisions across generations and identifying sources of important career beliefs and life themes that students have acquired. Specifically, the genogram is a vehicle for constructing a sort of "family tree" in which occupational roles are identified for one's ancestors. Once the occupational genogram is constructed, discussions can focus on the career beliefs and life themes

passed down through the generations. This technique can be expanded to address the same topics for other life roles. That is, by using the genogram, people can identify beliefs and life themes pertaining to specific life roles (e.g., parent, citizen) that they have acquired from members of their immediate and extended families. Career educators and career counselors can also use the information provided by their clients to contrast the influences on life-role salience emanating from group-oriented cultures with influences from more individualistic cultures. Terms such as "cultural assimilation" and "cultural accommodation" can be introduced in these discussions. The effects of sex-role stereotyping on life-role salience can also be examined here and challenged in these discussions. The goal of these interventions is to increase awareness as to the factors influencing people's beliefs about the primary roles of life.

Additional Interventions to Foster Life-Role Readiness and Life-Role Adaptability

Obviously, achieving life-role readiness, the precursor to life-role adaptability, requires more than knowing which life roles are salient. We must also acquire the knowledge and skills required for coping successfully with the tasks inherent in a life role. Thus, in addition to the examination of contextual factors that influence life-role salience, there are specific behaviors that facilitate the development of life-role readiness. Specifically, the behaviors of planning, exploring, information gathering, decision making, and reality testing are essential for developing life-role readiness (Niles 1998). These behaviors are also foundational for life-role adaptability.

Super (1957, 1977) linked these behaviors to developing readiness for the role of worker. These behaviors can also be linked to life roles beyond that of worker. For instance, planning requires future-oriented thinking about the life-role tasks we are likely to encounter (e.g., choosing a program of study in high school or college, trying out for a part in a community play, preparing a resume). Exploring requires us to learn about opportunities for life-role participation (e.g., working part time, providing childcare services, volunteering in civic and community agencies). Information gathering requires us to use resources (e.g., printed material, people, and computer programs) to learn about typical role-expectations and acceptable standards for role-performance. Decision making requires us to learn how decisions are made and to practice using effective decision-making skills. Finally, reality testing requires us to "try out" or participate in various life roles (e.g., school clubs, sports teams, volunteer activities, job shadowing) so that we can compare our role-conceptions and role-performance to role-expectations.

For example, to develop readiness for the life role of student, college-bound secondary school students must plan for the academic tasks they are likely to encounter (e.g., choosing a program of study, registering for college entrance examinations, knowing when to begin the process of college selection). They must also engage in thorough exploration of postsecondary school options. In the process of exploring, students must gather information relevant to the academic options they are considering. Once options are explored and information is gathered, students are then ready to make tentative academic plans and decisions. As students implement their decisions (e.g., entering an

academic program intended to prepare them for college, narrowing a list of prospective colleges), they begin the process of reality testing their choices. The postimplementation feedback they receive (e.g., grades) informs them as to the appropriateness of their current plans and indicates ways in which their plans may need to be revised (e.g., a high school student who plans on majoring in engineering in college but earns poor grades in science may need to explore, gather information, make decisions, and reality test options related to nonscience majors). Thus, the sequencing of these behaviors provides the framework by which we become more sophisticated in our understanding of life roles generally and in the crystallization of our life-role self-concepts in particular.

After engaging in planning, exploring, information gathering, decision making, and reality testing, we should be able to make more accurate self-referent life-role statements. For example, a career counseling client named "Anna" noted the following after engaging in systematic planning, exploring, and information gathering: "Leisure is important to me because it provides me with opportunities to manage my stress in a fun and beneficial way. I have tried a variety of leisure activities and do not like most of them. I do, however, enjoy playing golf and engage in leisure primarily through this activity. I make time each week for this activity and, even though I am a mediocre player, I know a lot about the game. I enjoy playing golf with my husband and daughter." Prior to playing golf, Anna wanted leisure to be more important because she wanted to infuse "more fun" into her life. However, she floundered among a variety of activities, most of which she did not enjoy. Her lack of enjoyment in these activities resulted in Anna's disengagement from the leisure role. Her career counselor asked Anna why, if she wanted more fun in her life and leisure was important to her, she was not actively participating in leisure activities. Anna and her career counselor developed a plan for her to become more actively engaged in leisure. Anna brainstormed possible activities, explored possibilities with her colleagues, gathered information about leisure options, decided to try golf, and after a few lessons and a couple of rounds, realized she enjoyed this activity.

Of particular interest among the behaviors identified by Super is the behavior of planning. It is important to plan because planning reflects awareness—the first step in coping with the developmental tasks associated with any life role. Lack of awareness often leads to developmental crises as we encounter tasks for which we are not prepared. An excellent example of this occurs when high school students leave school early. Many students who drop out of school encounter significant obstacles (e.g., competition for jobs, lack of skills) in obtaining gainful employment. These encounters often lead students to regret leaving school. Clearly, students at risk of dropping out tend not to realize the impact that decision will have on their lives at the time they choose to leave school. It is after leaving school that they realize that completing high school is essential to gaining employment that will pay a living wage. This lack of awareness leads to a developmental crisis and points to the importance of planning and having a sense of how one's experiences in the past and present influence and inform future plans (i.e., a time perspective). Anna focused on life-role adaptability by making a plan to integrate golf into her life-space. Playing alone restricted her family time. Playing with work colleagues seemed to extend her work time (something she was not anxious to do). Playing golf with her family members, however, resulted in the opportunity for her to mesh leisure with family in a way

that was enjoyable for Anna and her family members. Knowing that other life roles would make demands on Anna's time as well as her husband's and daughter's time, a realistic plan was developed that would increase the likelihood that Anna and her family could play golf on a regular basis. Having this plan in place made it easier not to participate in other life roles when they conflicted with her family's golf schedule.

Planning and a future time orientation are essential to life-role adaptability. Savickas (1997) noted that "balancing and sequencing commitments to school, work, family, leisure, worship, and the community requires careful planning" (p. 256). The sort of planning required in this instance suggests that career practitioners need to help clients look beyond a single life role (e.g., work) when helping their clients make career decisions. Holistic approaches turn career planning into life planning and use labels such as "integrative life planning" (Hansen, in press) to describe the career assistance process. Such approaches define career as the total constellation of life roles people play (Super 1980). An obvious strength of these approaches is that they reflect life as people live it (i.e., holistically).

Life-Role Planning Portfolios. An effective tool career educators and career counselors can use for helping people develop the behaviors of planning, exploring, information gathering, decision making, and reality testing is a career (or life-role) planning portfolio. Typically, one activity involved in completing a portfolio requires people to identify their interests, abilities, and hobbies. As the portfolio is completed, people also identify activities that are likely to be appropriate outlets for these important self-characteristics. People are then encouraged to participate in these activities to enhance their self-understanding and their understanding of the life role. In completing the portfolio, future plans are identified based on current interests, abilities, etc. In essence, the ongoing use of a life-role planning portfolio forces people to consider key questions related to important life-role behaviors. More specifically, portfolios are intended to encourage people to develop the behaviors of planning, exploring, information gathering, decision making, and reality testing as they relate to their most salient life roles. For example, an adolescent who anticipates one day being a parent can plan for this role by considering how parenting interacts with other roles. Different parenting styles can be explored by interviewing parents about their parenting practices and philosophies. Information can be gathered about the skills required for effective parenting (perhaps by taking a parenting class). Through these activities the adolescent can learn about the factors that are important to consider in making decisions about parenting. Finally, the adolescent can reality test his interest in parenting through participating in childcare activities. A life-role portfolio can be used to guide and document individuals' planning, exploring, information gathering, decision making, and reality testing for the primary life roles.

The use of a life-role planning portfolio is an example of a career development activity that helps people crystallize their life-role self-concepts. That is, the portfolio helps people cope with the developmental task of identity formation within the context of developing life-role readiness and in the developing life-role adaptability. It also serves as a vehicle for providing students with additional opportunities to discuss life-role aspects related to the various life roles. For instance, an adult worker can focus on her culture of

origin in discussing cultural prescriptions assigned to the citizen role. The influence of these cultural prescriptions on the adult worker's conceptualization of the citizen role can be discussed and related to the topics of role-acceptance and expectations for role-performance.

Personal Flexibility and Life-Role Adaptability

Herr (1990) developed the construct of personal flexibility, which is essential for effective career self-management in the 21st century. Personal flexibility and life-role adaptability are both concepts evoking the increasing importance of change as a constant in the future. Thus, both concepts are also transitional concepts.

Personal flexibility is composed of basic academic and adaptive skills. Academic skills for personal flexibility include skills in literacy, numeracy, and communications. It is difficult to conceive of jobs that do not require the ability to read, use mathematics, and communicate effectively with a wide range of co-workers, supervisors, and consumers (Herr and Cramer 1996). Literacy skills also include computer-based competencies. An increasing number of jobs require basic skills such as keyboarding, word processing, and web surfing.

Adaptive skills for personal flexibility include coping skills, the ability to tolerate ambiguity, learning skills (e.g., the ability to identify the limits of one's knowledge, the ability to ask relevant questions, the ability to identify appropriate information resources), the ability to handle data and work effectively with insufficient information, the ability to cope with change effectively, communication skills, and self-awareness (Herr and Cramer 1996). The adaptive skills comprising personal flexibility are especially relevant for life-role adaptability.

The Need to Develop Personal Flexibility in Life-Role Participation

If there is any consistency available in the popular media or in the news of the day, it is captured in the continuous litany of political, economic, and social changes transforming societies, social institutions, and work organizations. Societies in Eastern Europe are redefining themselves as free-market economies rather than communist, centrally managed societies. South Africa is terminating its political structures that maintained apartheid, the oppression of the majority of its citizens, and the exclusion of these persons from free choice of job or education. The rise of the global economy is triggering a restructuring of world occupational structures, elevating the importance of advanced technology and education as central instruments of international competition, and essentially reducing the importance of political boundaries or sovereignty. Because of these transformations, persons throughout the world are placed in roles that are governed by change and transition. In this context, the environments in which they live out their lives are no longer stable and predictable. Economic and social institutions are less prone than they traditionally have been to view their roles as surrogate parents for people, as providers of welfare and social safety nets, as the definers of rigid roles and behavioral processes by

which people's lives are played out in clear and unambiguous patterns. In such circumstances, societies, social institutions, and workplaces are increasingly transferring much of their power to define people's lives to the people themselves. In essence, as the world's governments and their social and economic structures undergo significant change, and they engage in transitions to new organizational forms, they implicitly create conditions that form a new psychology of individual adaptability to and accommodation of these changes (Reich 2001).

Within such conditions of uncertainty or ambiguity, persons must be nurtured to maintain a core of homeostasis, stability, and equilibrium and at the same time an ability to adapt their behaviors as contexts require. In this sense, the concept of personal flexibility is congruent with the notion of life-role adaptability. Both can be defined as "the quality of being able to change, without great difficulty, to fit new or changed circumstances pertaining to life-role demands."

Such views suggest that nations in transition generate a psychology of uncertainty and anxiety for some people and opportunities for others. People who cannot change with change, who do not have a behavioral repertoire that is flexible and able to be applied differentially and purposefully in settings or environments that are in the process of transformation, are at risk. Such perspectives are captured in a vivid fashion in some of the existing observations about career change and related life roles.

Hall and Associates (1996) have spoken of "new careers" as "Protean Careers" in such excerpts as the following:

> People's careers increasingly will become a series of minicycles (or short cycle learning stages) of exploration-trial-mastery-exit, as they move in and out of various product areas, technologies, functions, organizations, and other work environments (p. 33)...this protean form of career involves horizontal growth, expanding one's range of competencies and ways of connecting to work and other people, as opposed to the more traditional vertical growth of success (upward mobility). (p. 35)

According to Hall and his co-authors, "in the protean form of growth, the goal is learning, psychological success, and expansion of identity. In the more traditional form, the goal was advancement, success and esteem in the eyes of others, and power" (p. 35).

The use of Protean in such quotations means little until one understands its derivation. In Greek mythology, Proteus was a sea god who was said to be able to transform himself at will to deal with changing circumstances (Lifton 1993). In essence, contemporary environments, social and economic, are themselves in flux and they require persons to accommodate such flux by adaptive behaviors, including learning, role shifts, fluid blending of family, parenting, and work roles. The need for such life-role adaptability is seen in other observations about the changing opportunity structure and careers, which suggest that the organization of work and the evolving conceptions of careers in Europe and in

other parts of the world are qualitatively different than the concepts that have been true historically. Arnold and Jackson (1997), two European scholars, have suggested that in many nations—

> The changes taking place in the structure of opportunities mean a widening diversity of career patterns and experiences.... more and different career transition will be taking place. One consequence may be that in the future more men will experience the kind of fragmented careers that many women have experienced (p. 428).... more people will be working for small and medium-sized employers, and there will be more people who are self-employed.... they highlight the need for lifelong learning and an appropriate strategy for career guidance to support people especially during career transitions. (p. 429)

The concepts identified here suggest that not only are the organization of work and the patterns by which people approach and implement work in their lives changing, but so are other life roles. Because the majority of women with children are now at work, child rearing and the shifting roles of men and women in that process are undergoing considerable transformation. So is the locus of work. More persons, men and women, are working from their homes, either telecommuting in relation to their primary roles in an office someplace else or because they are self-employed. In such cases, their public and private roles in employment and in family life become less distinct and increasingly blended. When men and women have dual careers *and* children, questions arise about who is the financial provider in the home and how parental responsibilities will be distributed. In the case of responsibility for aging parents for many of these families, who is the caregiver? These and other pressures on life roles and their adaptability reaffirm the increasing complexities related to achieving balance in life, and the need to attain personal flexibility to achieve such balance. Clearly, achieving life-role balance will require new forms of socialization, learning, role modeling, and support systems, including counseling.

The need for personal flexibility and life-role adaptability also highlights the need for new theories of personal development that emphasize self-invention in ways that provide us with some indications as to how we can achieve greater life-role adaptability. Theories such as Super's (1990) must be extended to include guidance as to how we can develop the ability to scan the environments we occupy and discern demands for change, acquire the emotional stability and intrapersonal security necessary to manage fluid life-role demands, and try new roles without losing core elements of security and consistency of self-awareness.

Among the theories that promise to provide such understanding of human development are those embodying cognitive and constructivist views. Embedded in cognitive theories of behavior are concerns about how individuals think about and label events, how they process information, how they learn to perceive cues around them, and how they construct their belief systems in rational or irrational terms. In short, cognitive approaches are concerned with how we create meaning for ourselves as we interpret environmental stimuli. In this sense, cognitive perspectives view people as activists in constructing their own reality by the decisions they make and by those they avoid making.

This emphasis on individuals as *meaning makers* is also central to constructivist approaches. Although multiple definitions of constructivism exist, in general, constructivists view human beings as more than simply passive recipients of information or as simply persons who share or receive one true reality that is external to them and capable of objective, quantitative analysis. Rather, constructivists view people as creators of a self or of personal constructs through organized patterns of meaning within a world of multiple realities. As proposed by Sexton (1997), constructivism places emphasis on the person's active creation and building of meaning and significance; constructivists view knowledge as an invented and constructed meaning system rather than a freestanding, stable, external entity.

In the sense that we have used the terms personal flexibility and life-role adaptability here, both cognitive and constructivist theories have important contributions to make to the two concepts. Certainly, from a constructivist view, personal flexibility and life-role adaptability occur within multiple environments and role expectations. Individuals must be able to fashion their personal patterns of meaning within such realities; cognitive approaches would argue that it is important to process information, think about and label both the multiple realities to which one is responding and one's own ability to differentiate behaviors, and adapt to change, without losing the core of one's personal constructs or self-concepts. Thus, cognitive approaches would say that attributions of personal flexibility and of life-role adaptability are themselves cognitive concepts as well as ways of making meaning for oneself. It is our belief that such concepts will emerge as key constructs in the career development process as people strive to achieve balance in their life roles.

Interventions. A wide variety of possibilities exists for incorporating cognitive and constructivist perspectives in career counseling and career education programs. For example, cognitive psychology models can be incorporated into career education curricula. Career practitioners can teach basic cognitive concepts related to thoughts creating feelings [see David Burns' (1999) book, ***Feeling Good*** for extensive activities related to infusing cognitive psychology into everyday life]. Lewis and Gilhousen (1981) offer an excellent model for coping with common career myths that keep many of us "stuck" in our career development. For example, those adhering to the "quitters never win" myth believe that career changing is synonymous with failing. This belief ignores the fact that people and jobs change over time. The more useful cognitive alternative to the "quitters never win" myth is to view change as positive development in response to an evolving self and changing work situation. Another common career myth identified by Lewis and Gilhousen is that "anyone can be president." This myth overemphasizes individual action in achieving career goals. Although achieving career goals requires hard work, other factors (often extraneous to the individual) also influence the degree to which we achieve our goals in life. Denying this fact can lead to inappropriate striving for unrealistic goals and unnecessary self-blame when we are working hard but not able to achieve the goals we set. This is particularly the case in the current situation wherein corporate downsizing often has little to do with the competence and effort of individual workers.

Summary

The place of work in our lives coexists, sometimes peacefully and complementary to, and sometimes in conflict with, roles we perform in other parts of our lives (Super 1982). Along with our roles of employee, colleague, or supervisor at work, we find ourselves throughout our lives playing roles in various other "theaters." These other roles and theaters include, for example, those of student, classmate, or athlete at school; child, parent, partner, sibling, or spouse within our families; individual or friend at leisure; and leader, volunteer, or neighbor in our communities. The centrality of work, as well as roles in these other life domains, constitutes the fundamental focus of career development.

Theodore Roosevelt stated that "When you play, play hard; when you work, don't play at all." As a society, we typically advance President Roosevelt's dictum by construing work and nonwork domains of human life as conflictual and mutually constraining (Bielby 1992; Savickas 1999). We thereby often disregard the ways in which these domains can and do intersect to contribute deeper meaning to our lives (Bielby 1992). Moving beyond a life-role conflict perspective requires examining how commitment to and involvement in roles in various life domains provide us with a sense of meaning and identity. It involves coming to view the roles we perform as integral and complementary threads of the fabric of our lives that can be mutually enhancing and growth producing. We can also advocate for change in workplace policies and initiatives that accommodate a synthesis among work and nonwork life domains. In so doing, we can support a paradigm shift away from role conflict and toward life-role integration (Savickas 1999).

Developing life-role readiness fosters life-role adaptability; fusing play into life-role activities enhances life satisfaction. When we are able to envision and enact our life roles in complementary rather than conflictual ways, we can more optimally achieve the promise and rewards of life-role balance. Therein, we can better avoid the pitfalls wrought by contention and competition among life roles engendered by the unique and challenging complexities of 21st-century life.

Our examination in this monograph of achieving life-role balance reflects more widespread changes and issues in society. The life-role balance issue extends beyond the parameters of career development, reaching outward to the levels of communities, societies, and nations experiencing and dealing with a range of issues related to changing demographics, increasing cultural diversity, and the challenge of adopting a multicultural mindset (Leong and Hartung 2000). Prompted by social and political action focused on diversity issues, shifting demographics in many parts of the world, fluctuating economic conditions, increasingly sophisticated technology and information systems, and the changing nature of work, scholars endeavor to reevaluate past and present understandings of the very notion of careers (Collin and Young 2000). Examining the future of career as a construct leads to the conclusion that cultural issues figure prominently in efforts to help individuals understand and achieve life-role balance (Leong and Hartung 2000).

Summary

Increased attention to social issues has surfaced in discussions about deemphasizing careers and instead theorizing about and helping people to develop the role of work in their lives relative to roles in nonwork domains (Blustein 2001; Richardson 1993, 1994, 1996). This perspective calls for a shift from talking about career development, with its socioeconomic status, educational, and privilege implications, to considering human development through work and nonwork roles, a perspective that may be more relevant to people of diverse social statuses and cultural backgrounds (Niles, Herr, and Hartung, in press). Richardson (1993) suggested that this perspective shifts the emphasis to work as "a central human activity that is not tied to or solely located in the occupational structure...[and] a basic human function among populations for whom work has a multiplicity of meanings, including but not restricted to a career meaning" (p. 427). So conceived, work represents a culture-general human life role, whereas career represents a more culture-specific form of occupational life (Niles, Herr, and Hartung, in press).

Adapting an epistemology that interprets *career* choice and development to mean *human* development through a constellation of work and nonwork life roles holds great promise for contemporary career counseling practice and for society (Cook 1994; Richardson 1993; Savickas 2000; Super and Sverko 1995). Some career theories currently converge on this theme. For example, the sociological perspective on work and career development articulated by Hotchkiss and Borow (1996) recognizes that as members of social institutions people play a variety of social roles. Similarly, Gottfredson's (1996) theory of circumscription and compromise attends to issues of social identity, orientation to sex roles, and social valuation. The Theory of Work Adjustment (Dawis 1996) describes career development as "the *unfolding* of capabilities and requirements in the course of a person's interaction with environments of various kinds (home, school, play, work) across the life span" (p. 94). As we have noted, the most obvious example—life-span, life-space theory (Super, Savickas and Super 1996)—emphasizes the multiple roles that form the basis of the human life space.

The movement to human development and away from more narrowly defined notions of career development is also reflected in approaches to career counseling. For example, Peavy (1992) and Cochran (1997) present constructivist approaches to career intervention that highlight the client's narrative life story in constructing career plans. These career interventions approaches rely on card sorts, autobiographies, and other techniques that emphasize the individual's life-span development rather than relying upon the use of standardized tests that locate person's interests, aptitudes, and values on a normal curve. The latter approach (i.e., the use of standardized tests) emphasizes career development in a comparative sense. The former acknowledges the individual's unique life history in composing a life that includes multiple life-role development.

Cross-cultural psychology also articulates life roles as a fundamental element of subjective culture—defined as the human-made part of people's environments (Triandis 1994). Roles are etic constructs in that all cultures transmit expectations about social role behavior. Individual behavior in social roles differs as a function of the range of behavioral role options a culture makes available to its members. For example, the roles of father, spouse, and worker for a fifth-generation European-American man likely mean

something very different from what these roles mean for a first-generation Chinese-American man. In addition, the changing nature of work, the growing diversity of society, the global economy and marketplace, and occupational and other barriers limit and influence the viability of different roles for people. We therefore must remain cognizant of two facts as we consider the prospect of achieving life balance. First, people differ in terms of which roles are most viable and salient for them. Second, personal, structural, and cultural factors such as gender expectations, social class, discrimination, personal choice, and family expectations influence individuals' levels of commitment to and participation in life roles (Fitzgerald and Betz 1994; Fouad and Arbona 1994; Niles and Goodnough 1996). Fostering play as a context of human development may offer one way to achieve more optimal integration of life roles. Encouraging the development of life-role readiness (rather than more narrowly focusing on developing occupational readiness) and fostering life-role adaptability will help people to live life in the balance that they define as personally optimal and meaningful.

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